

Back-up Cameras: NOT AS SAFE AS YOU THINK

Isn't technology great? Every day we see new technology that makes our lives better, more efficient, and safer. Cellphones have facetime capabilities and great cameras. Fit bits track our active lifestyles. Hover boards ... who wouldn't want one? Back-up cameras in our vehicles help us see things we normally wouldn't.

But sometimes you have to wonder if all of these great inventions really DO make our lives better and safer. Take the back-up cameras in our cars. While they're helpful in providing a view we normally can't see, they can lead to more accidents because drivers may rely too heavily on them.

Back-up cameras were introduced as early as 2003. At that time, just three car models, out of 278, offered the cameras. By 2017, it's estimated that all but 20 of 362 car models will have back-up cameras! In fact, the federal government has mandated that all new vehicles sold in the U.S. have back-up cameras by 2018.

The primary purpose of back-up cameras is to prevent "back over" accidents of young children who are not otherwise visible to the driver. That said, the cameras are typically located on the back of the car at about waist level. The camera provides a great view of objects immediately behind the vehicle, as well as 50 to 70 feet behind the vehicle. The camera view typically extends 8 to 10 feet on each side of the vehicle.

Despite the quality of the image and size of the screens in the car, back-up cameras only provide a limited view of what's going on behind and around the vehicle. In fact, most cameras only provide an 80-degree field of view behind the vehicle. That leaves 280 degrees of view around the vehicle not accounted for if the driver only views the back-up camera while backing. That's why it's critical, for their own safety and the safety of those around them, that drivers do not become overly dependent on back-up cameras.



Back up camera view

Using the back-up camera only limits your view to 80 degrees of your surroundings.

Even with the significant increase in the number of vehicles with back-up cameras, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that back-over accidents have gone down by only 8% (statistics from 2008 to 2011).

Backing is the most difficult maneuver in a car and yet we perform it when we usually first get into the car and aren't yet in the "driving mode." When you've been out driving a while and are in the driving mode, practice backing into parking places whenever practical. It allows

you to drive past the opening before you back into it and get a complete view of any obstructions like children's toys, etc.

This is why you see UPS trucks and Wisconsin State Patrol cars backed into spaces when parked. They park while in the driving mode so when they leave, they're not backing out which, again, is the most difficult maneuver to perform when they're not in the driving mode.

To prevent property damage and personal injury, every driver should practice these steps to safe backing:

Whenever possible, park so you avoid backing altogether.

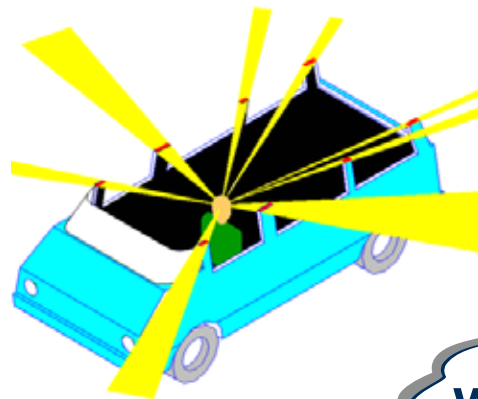
Walk around the vehicle before backing up to make sure your path is clear of people and obstructions. Remember this acronym: G.O.A.L. – Get Out And Look.

Back slowly, watching for people, vehicles, or objects entering your path of travel.

Frequently check mirrors and blind spots, scanning from left to right. Check the left blind spot by looking over your left shoulder, check the left side view mirror, check in front of the vehicle, check the rear view mirror, check the back-up camera screen, check the right side view mirror, check the right blind spot by looking over your right shoulder. Repeat this frequently while backing.

Back-up cameras can be convenient by providing a view you normally wouldn't have. They should not, however, be the only view you use when backing up.

Turning your head while using the side mirrors, review mirror, and back-up camera, greatly improves visibility and reduces the potential for accidents.



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